

## A Changing of the Guard at Local Fish Market

By PAULA MAXWELL

The tide is turning on Railroad Avenue with the sale of Don Merry's Back River Fish Market, soon to become Back River Lobster Pound, Fish Market and Chowder House.

"Duxbury customers should be very excited about the new operation here," said Merry. "It will be a first class fish and produce market run by a gentleman who is a major force in the wholesale lobster business in New England."

After six and a half years, Merry said he decided to sell the fish market business to someone who has spent his life involved in every facet of the seafood industry.

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**- Don Merry  
Back River Fish**

Merry will now concentrate on his own aquaculture busi-

ness and produce market in Manomet which he bought and reopened in 1998 after previous owners ran the business for over 30 years. He also recently opened a new Lobster Pound seafood market in Buzzards Bay.

Durnford's connection to Duxbury evolved when he began supplying seafood and lobsters to Back River Fish Market several years ago. Merry said that a while back Durnford told him that if he ever considered selling the business, he would be interested. The timing was right for Merry and he said he felt good about the future of the business under the new ownership.

Durnford recently signed an agreement with Bud and Ben Goodrich, who own the fish market location, the site of a former train station in the Millbrook section of town.

"Bud wanted a fish market operation to remain there and I believe he is pleased with the turn of events. The new Duxbury store will be the largest retail fish market south of Boston," he said.

Durnford said he will involve Merry who will still be in the picture on a consulting basis on such matters as prod-

uct quality, selection and local suppliers. Merry Shellfish farm, through a grant to cultivate about an acre of local shoreline. He said he takes juvenile shellfish seed and grows them out to market size for shipping. "Duxbury oysters" are popular menu items sold nationwide and are, considered among the best, Merry said

New fish market owner Darryl Durnford is a local businessman, fisherman and major wholesale lobster supplier to the U.S. and international markets. He has already begun renovations at the Railroad Avenue fish market and will double the size of the retail store substantially increasing the selection of fresh seafood and produce.

Durnford also runs a successful Lobster Pound seafood

business.

Merry, a Duxbury native and one of three thriving fish market owners in town, said he leaves the business with fond memories and loyal customers with whom he has developed strong ties.

This week he reflected on some of the highlights of his successful tenure as a fish market owner in town.

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He also rates among highlights, winning the town's chowderfest two years in a row

and providing chowders and seafood to the Rolling Stones.

Durnford said that he intends to support local fishermen. He plans to take advantage of local lobsters, fish and shellfish from Cape Cod, Plymouth, Brant Rock, and Duxbury and day boat scallops.

The new store will offer many hot and cold seafood items in addition to fresh seafood.

Among the special features of the new fish market will be a large steam cooker which will enable customers to order ahead and pick up hot steam cooked lobsters, steamers and other fish to go. Durnford said his Manomet store does a very large steam cooked take out business.

There will also be a daily selection of at least six fresh seafood chowders, stews, soups and bisques as well as shrimp and crab hors d'oeuvres and other seafood platters and special orders.

He said his Manomet store is well known for its lobster rolls and he hopes Duxbury customers will enjoy the popular take out item, which has become a local claim to fame.

"High quality" fresh fruits and produce from the Boston market area will be delivered fresh daily to the store, which he said will be open seven days a week 9 am to 7 pm except Christmas, Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.

Durnford said he is thrilled to be in a business he loves and

is very excited about opening the store in Duxbury.

He grew up in Plymouth and began fishing for lobsters off Manomet Point when he was just 13-years old. As a teenager he worked for Mayflower Seafood on docks in Plymouth and spent a year at Mass. Maritime Academy before deciding to become a fisherman in Alaska.

He spent 10 years fishing off the coast there, working on major processing boats and supplying the major U.S. and international distributors, restaurants and other locations. "We fished revenues of between \$36 and \$54 million a year. I worked hard and moved my way up in the industry," he said.

He got a sound business education from his Alaskan ex-

perience in the seafood industry contracting with such outfits as Mrs. Paul's Seafood, Gorton's of Gloucester and McDonalds, among others.

His wholesale operation is handled mostly out of Manomet. Today Durnford is a major lobster wholesaler in New England shipping over 15,000 pounds of lobster every other day from New England suppliers to markets all over the U.S. and the world including restaurants and other locations.

Chris Zeisler, who has managed the Manomet store in the past, will be the new store man-

ager in Duxbury. He said the store will have top notch state of the art refrigeration and display cases and facilities when the renovations completed.

Durnford and Merry shook hands outside the shop for a photo opportunity for the *Clipper* last week displaying both the old Back River Fish Market and the Lobster Pound signs.

Durnford said that he just recently decided to combine both names as a way of continuing the tradition of customer service established by Merry's Back River Fish and at the same time introducing the respected Lobster Pound business.

"Back River Lobster Pound Fish Market and Chowder House seems appropriate and provides a connection. I have honestly spent most of my life in fish markets and I can assure you we will have one of the most impressive seafood outlets around."

As for Merry, he said he will miss the experience but plans to be a regular customer.

"I would like to thank everybody who walked through the door on Railroad Avenue, the Goodrich family and all of the business people in the Millbrook area who were great to be around."





**A HEALTHY SIGN** – After six and a half years Back River Fish Market owner Don Merry has sold the business to Lobster Pound owner Darryl Durnford. The new Back River Lobster Pound, Fish Market and Chowder House will open next month following renovations which will more than double the size of the retail store and triple the selection of fresh seafood items and chowders. (L-R): Don Merry, Chris Zeisler and Darryl Durnford.